1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

the fire, while no one was looking. Before going on to that period, the narrative will tell a little about the birth of

Twins (*Olonjamba*).[1] 'If twins are born, when they have finished cutting (the cords of) the navels they bury their placentas out of doors at a cross-road. After washing and anointing them with oil, they shout saying, *Ulú! Ulú! Ulú!* There have come here a man and a woman. When the people come, they begin while yet outside (the hut), to curse[2] (and continue) until they enter, cursing the parents. It is called *Ongombo*, The Diviner's Basket. In that way such children are followed about by all, that none of them may die. And all the time that such children are growing, it is done month by month. The parent comes out and begins to curse the people who are in the village, and then all come from their houses and follow cursing her.'

In the case of triplets, when they are weaned, one is given to the king.[3]

As soon as the midwives have finished their task, the father may come in and take up the child, but men do not 'like' to hold a child which is still 'red' (i.e. not yet black) and whose 'neck is not yet strong'. Should a woman abort (*pulumuisa*), or should the child be stillborn or die at birth, the loss is accepted philosophically, quoting the proverb:

Cinene ombenje akolovi hacimueko.
The main thing (is) the gourd jug, the shavings (are) nothing.

Should the mother also die, then they quote:

Olūsī ka kuatele, ocinunga ca enda lovava.
A fish (he) did not catch, the bracelet went with water.

Should a young woman complain that her baby is too small, the others may remind her:

Esaila olio osanji.
The egg that (is) the chicken.

Should she complain that her baby does not grow properly, they will say:

Ka ci kuli omōlā ombia, omōlā omunu o kula
It does not grow the child of (a) pot, (the) child of (a) person grows.

[1] Lit., Elephants. The reference is to the names given to twins: *Njamba* (Elephant), *Hosi* (Lion), or *Ngeve* (Hippopotamus).
[2] *Tukālā*, which literally means to call *hard* names.
[3] I knew of one such case in Civaka.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

has been cited to prove conclusively that the 'Jagas' were not one horde but many, and that they multiplied by splitting into other and smaller groups as they went from pillage to pillage. Battell recounts that they killed their own offspring,[1] and this is further attested by other contemporary writers.[2] They ensured their increase by taking the young of their enemies who, as Purchas noted, were trained up as a sort of Janisaries. Battell said that of 16,000 in the camp 'there were but twelve natural Gagas that were their captains, and fourteen or fifteen women'.[3] Purchas added to the first edition of *Purchas, His Pilgrimage* (1613) a note which is helpful in determining, if not their ultimate, at least their proximate, origin, and also their final place of settling. He wrote:

> He (i.e., Battell) saith they are called Iagges by the Portugals, by themselves Imbangolas . . . and come from Sierra Liona. . . .
>
> Elembe, the great Iagge, brought with him twelve thousand of these cruel monsters from Sierra Liona, and after much mischief and spoil settled himself in Benguele, twelve degrees from the Zone southwards, and there breedeth and groweth into a nation. But Kelandula, sometime his page, proceeds in that beastly life before mentioned, and the people of Elembe, by great troops, run to him and follow his camp in hope of spoil.[4]

According to this, we may take it that the designation of Iagges, Jaga, Jaka, or Ayaka came from the Portuguese, which means that it came from one or more of the Bantu languages—that it was originally a description given to these hordes or to their leaders by the African people whom they fought and conquered, or even by the African traders[5] who went to the 'Jaga' camps to buy slaves in exchange for cloth, beads, rum, and muskets. The word evidently comes from the verb to fight, *oku yaka*; they fight, *a yaka*,[6] or *va yaka*. Father Van Wing[7] and Emil Torday[8] both hold that there is some real relationship between the tribe of the Bayaka of the middle Kuango and the 'Jaga' hordes, and make that

[1] Ravenstein, op. cit., pp. 32, 84 f. Could this have been an (extreme) instance of the well-known fear of menstrual-blood found among many people, including the Ovimbundu?

[2] Ravenstein, op. cit., p. 32, note 4.

[3] Ravenstein, op. cit., p. 33.

[4] Ravenstein, op. cit., pp. 84, 85.

[5] *Pombeiros descalços*, barefoot traders.

[6] The Portuguese transcription of this form is *a iaca*, or *a iacca*, with the hard *c* mistakenly changed to *g*, and *i* taken for *j* as was formerly often done.

[7] Van Wing, op. cit., p. 106.

[8] Torday, op. cit., see map facing p. 282.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

of this symbolism relating to occupations of males and females respectively, is obvious. 842

Many women bear children when they are away in the fields, but help at home is often given. The mothers of the wife and of the husband may not be present at the confinement. No childless woman may be near during the confinement or convalescence. The father may not be present or "the child would be ashamed to be born." Before and during her pregnancy a woman feeds her husband with a prickly plant which is mixed in his food; this makes him faithful to her. 844 [784]

The abdomen is bound after delivery in order to keep the uterus in position. There is a very small amount of bleeding after childbirth; in fact the flow of blood is quite finished in two or three days. The nearer the diet comes to that of the white man the greater the bleeding at delivery. A pregnant woman may not beat a drum, or she will bear a drum. A woman who sees the blood from circumcision of a male will not have any children.

When a female child is born, the umbilical cord is cut with a hoe to ensure that the female will be a good worker in the field. The cord of a male is cut with an arrow to insure good hunting. A newly born child receives a drink of beer, and a cord is tied round its waist. This is not for support; it is the string from which, much later, the lower garment hangs. Girls do not menstruate until they are fifteen or even seventeen years of age. During the months after first menstruation a girl advances rapidly from childhood to womanhood. 841

The medicines that women take to secure abortions are bitter. A woman will refuse quinine because she thinks it will cause abortion. 847 ● It is certain that twins are welcome among the Ovimbundu, but there are special observances connected with their birth and death. A twin birth is not thought to imply dual fatherhood. Twins are called Njamba ("elephant") and Hosi ("lion"). Although twins are of opposite sexes each receives one of the two names. Njamba is the first born, and Hosi is the second to be delivered. The medicine-man holds a ceremony to cure the mother of twins. The afterbirth of twins is placed in two gourds and carried outside the village for burial by two midwives. The mother of twins must wear round her neck the horn of an antelope given by the medicine-man. She has to blow this when crossing a river, meeting a crowd of people, or seeing a hawk overhead. People laugh at her and in fun say that she is a pig or a bitch. "The woman says the same kind of words to them." Children may be adopted, but they never really 845 597

597 belong to the foster parents. When an adopted girl marries, half the presents from the husband are given to the natural parents, and the other half to the foster parents.

845 In a case of triple birth at Ngalangi two infants died at birth; the other succumbed after three months. In another instance a woman bore three children and in the vernacular of my informant "something which was nothing," but all died. In a third case of triple birth a woman had a boy and two girls. The boy died at the age of fifteen [826] years; the girls grew up and bore children. Albinos do not find it easy to obtain wives. I was told that an albino man at Ngalangi could not find a wife until he married a widow who had several children, because unmarried girls of his own age did not want him. One of the charms collected has to be worn by a woman who has triplets. The object is a rattle (*olusangu*), which the woman shakes when she meets any one. If she gave an ordinary greeting the children would die.

115 The greater part of this information was obtained at Ngalangi by interrogating women who were questioned in Umbundu by Mrs. McDowell. At Elende I asked my interpreter Ngonga to interrogate 843 his wife. According to Ngonga a woman must visit a female practitioner in the first month of her pregnancy. The face and the body of the pregnant woman are painted with red, black, and white spots. This means that she will have no difficulty in bearing children, neither will she have any sickness during the nine months of gestation. "When her belly hurts" (i.e., the quickening), the woman goes to the same female *ocimbanda*, who paints lines of white, red, and black across her breast.

751 The *ocimbanda* gives the woman a necklace consisting of a strip of leather to which two cowries are attached. Experience proves that such a necklace is difficult to buy. If the woman has a necklace of this kind which was worn by her grandmother, it is a very powerful aid to conception, a relief in painful menstruation, and a means of securing easy delivery and normal gestation. I could not find any trace of an idea relating to the entry of a soul, ancestral or otherwise, into the foetus.

841 *Ongandu* is the name for a disease of the genitalia; but Ngonga used the word to describe abdominal pain suffered by a woman who has had no children. By this I suppose he means painful menstruation. The curative root which is given is called *kayambua*.

• 847 Abortion is never secured by mechanical means. The medicine (*ikemba*) is made from the root of a plant that is boiled in water and

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

drunk. The concoction is described in Umbundu as *themba vioku tundisapo imo* ("medicine to take away belly"). 847

When the monthly period begins too early in life, the medicine-man recommends that the young girl should wear the cowrie necklace worn by her mother's mother. 841

A deformed child is destroyed, but not if it has been allowed to survive the first day. 847

If male triplets are born, two stay permanently with the mother. At the age of five years one child goes to the king, whose child he becomes. 851

When a woman has had relationships with more than one man, she will die in childbirth unless the medicine-man is called to cure her. 837

In a Vachokue village of eastern Angola I bought a female wooden figure. It was explained that this would be nursed by a woman, one of whose twins was dead, in order to induce another conception. Moreover, the nursing of the figure prevents the death of the second twin. The Ovimbundu also use these wooden figurines for replacing dead twins (p. 163). 532 845 842

Children are suckled for a long time; even those of three years and older come to the breast. There are instances in which milk is present but lacking the nutritive qualities; then the baby is likely to die. The matter is simpler when a mother gives no milk at all because the baby is given to another woman, but not necessarily to a woman who is suckling a child. A baby whose mother has no milk may be given to a woman who has not borne a child for many years, and the sucking of the child quickly induces a milk supply. This is agreed upon by informants at Ngalangi and Elende who have seen a child nursed by a woman with withered breasts. Protection is given to the fontanelle by covering it with a vegetable gum which hardens. 853

Near the chief village of the Vangangella at Ngalangi there is a mound decorated with feathers and painted wooden posts (Plate XCII, Fig. 1). Childless women are placed on the mound which is near a river. They are covered with mud, after which the medicine-man sings songs and administers potions. The women go home and are made to sit on mounds in their kitchens. These mounds, which are made in rows, like earth heaped up after hoeing a trench, may be a symbol of successful agriculture and human fertility. 842 789

On looking into the subject of blood brotherhood I found that an exchange of blood between two males who swore mutual fidelity was at one time common. At the present day an exchange of blood is 608